

# Silver Linings

ISSUE TWO | SUMMER 2021



## Bo's got game.

**Meet Silver Hill's  
most popular visitor.**

### Also in this issue:

Celebrating Our 90th Anniversary  
2020 Donor Recognition

Our Team Approach to Handling COVID  
Community Resilience Campaign Evolves

Supporter Spotlight: Mr. Rudy Ruggles

Focus on Adolescent Mental Health

Provider Profile: Dr. Rocco Marotta  
and more!



SILVER HILL HOSPITAL

# Adapting and Advancing Care in the Midst of the Pandemic

Welcome to the second edition of Silver Linings, a magazine dedicated to our volunteers, friends and generous supporters. Thank you for being there with us and helping us navigate these difficult times.

It has been a challenging time for all of us, but I am extremely proud of the way the Silver Hill Hospital community has risen to the occasion and created unique opportunities among the uncertainty of COVID-19.

The pandemic created a mental health crisis in America and your support has helped us to be there for those suffering from anxiety, depression, PTSD and substance abuse caused by the isolation and unpredictability of the pandemic.

COVID changed everything and we had to adapt quickly and rethink the way we did admissions, clinical treatment, food service, housekeeping and nearly every other aspect of our operations. The safety of our patients and staff was the top priority for every adaptation we made; however, we also remained committed to maintaining the high level of care for which Silver Hill Hospital is known.

Adjusting to the pandemic advanced the way we care for our patients. Telemedicine and virtual care will remain a component of our treatment strategy going forward. In-person care will be emphasized when that type of treatment is needed but the flexibility of telemedicine will help us better meet the needs of patients.

Early in the pandemic we recognized the need to support the mental health and resilience of frontline medical workers and first responders who were under tremendous stress as the crisis unfolded. We launched the Community Resilience Campaign (CRC) and I am proud of the vital service it provides to organizations. Led by psychiatrist Stephen N. Xenakis, MD, the CRC has built an impressive list of clients, including local community organizations and law enforcement agencies, reaching more than 1,000 individuals.

There is much promise for the road ahead. Vaccines are being administered and will, hopefully, allow us to better control the virus. Challenges will remain, but opportunity will accompany them. With your support, we will make the most of these opportunities, and find new ways to better serve our patients and community.



Dr. Andrew J. Gerber  
President and Medical Director



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# Silver Linings

A PUBLICATION FOR FRIENDS OF  
SILVER HILL HOSPITAL

Silver Linings is a publication for Silver Hill Hospital's supporters and friends. It will be produced periodically with important news and updates highlighting our continued efforts to expand and enhance our facilities and services.

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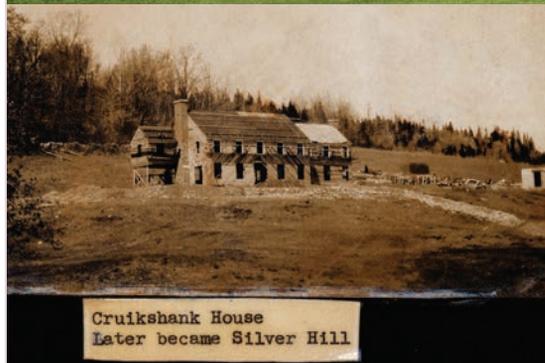
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## Celebrating Silver Hill Hospital's 90th Anniversary

# 90 years of excellence transforming the lives of people impacted by mental illness and addiction

## COMPASSION, COLLABORATION, ACCOUNTABILITY AND INNOVATION AT THE FOREFRONT OF CARE



Cruikshank House  
Later became Silver Hill

the campus is an important  
element of the healing  
process.

Andrew J. Gerber, MD, PhD,  
is the ninth distinguished  
psychiatrist to serve as  
President and Medical Director  
of the facility. Gerber points  
to the storied past of Silver  
Hill Hospital as inspiration for its  
ambitious future goals.

For 90 years, Silver Hill Hospital  
has been providing the best in  
mental health and addiction care.  
Dr. John A.P. Millet and Elvira  
Parsons, an English nurse,  
founded Silver Hill in 1931 on  
the New Canaan property the  
hospital still calls home.

The property originally included  
a house, stable and barn, with  
patients staying at the house,  
then known as Silver Hill Inn.  
Although it has grown to include  
14 buildings and an east and west  
campus (separated by Valley  
Road), Silver Hill Hospital retains  
its bucolic, country feel surrounded  
by woods with streams, ponds and  
wildflower meadows on the property.  
Many patients say the beauty of



Silver Construction.  
At south end of the Green Office.  
Note the two Willow Trees in distance  
planted years ago.

Silver Hill's vision is: "By 2025, we will  
lead the field in evidence-based, high  
quality, individualized care for mental  
health and addiction." ■



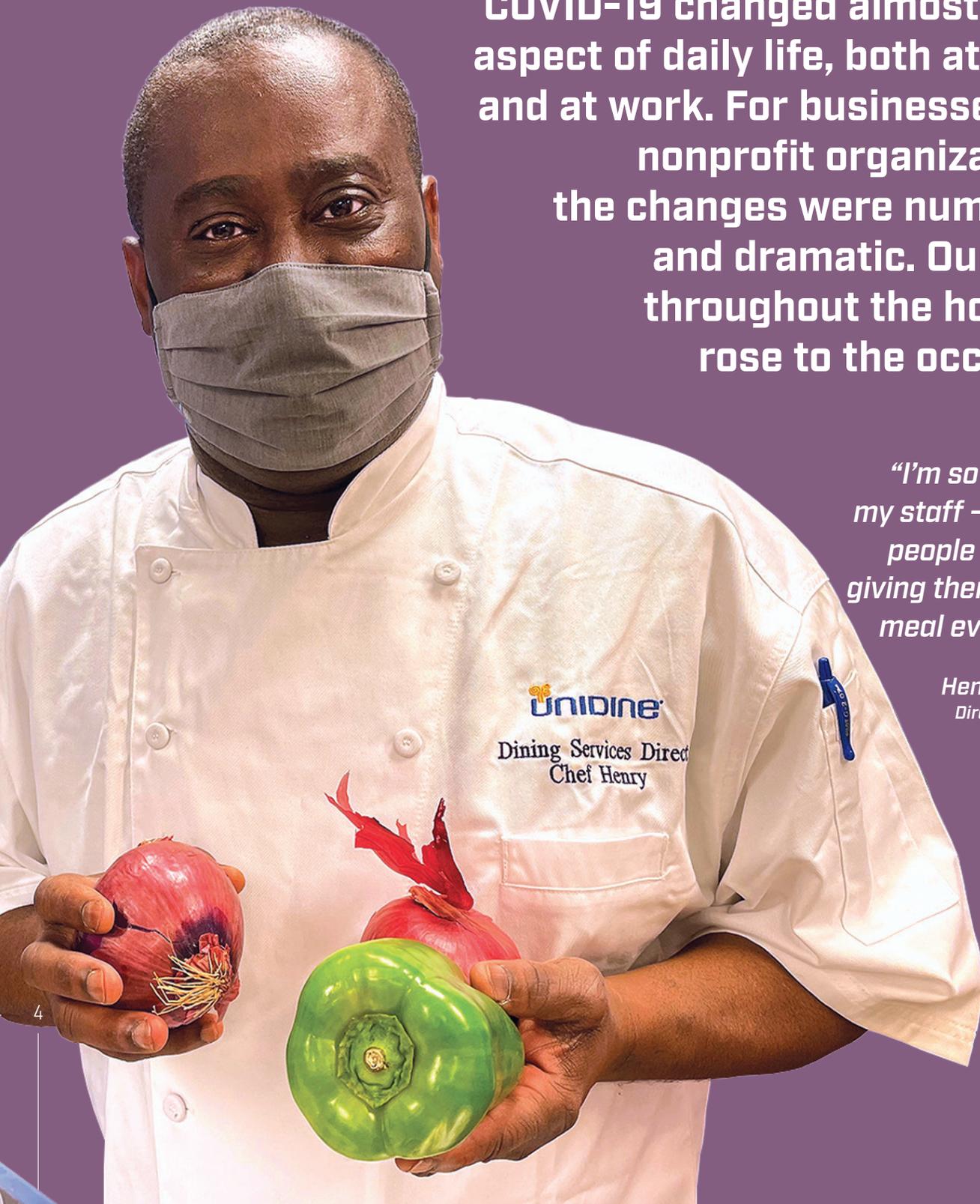
COVID-19  
HEROES ON THE FRONTLINE

# *A Recipe for Success*

COVID-19 changed almost every aspect of daily life, both at home and at work. For businesses and nonprofit organizations, the changes were numerous and dramatic. Our staff throughout the hospital rose to the occasion.

*"I'm so proud of my staff – keeping people safe and giving them a good meal every day."*

*Henry Godfrey  
Director of Dining  
Services*





***Michelle Dias, Senior Residential Counselor, receives her COVID-19 vaccination from Charge Nurse Carol Boscarino, RN. Healthcare personnel were eligible to receive the COVID-19 vaccination during Phase 1a of Connecticut's rollout plan. 76% of Silver Hill employees were vaccinated in early 2021.***

At Silver Hill Hospital, every department had to rise to the occasion and make the necessary adjustments to ensure the safety of its patients and staff, while at the same time, continue to provide the best possible treatment of mental illness and substance abuse. Keeping the doors open throughout the pandemic was critically important as the uncertainty and stress of COVID-19 created a mental health crisis in the country.

"It was a difficult year in a lot of ways with the pandemic and putting in place a lot of infection control measures, which have been incredibly successful," Michael Groat, PhD, Chief Clinical Officer, says. "We had a less than one percent infection rate, which is stunning. That's a credit to a number of staff who have coordinated that effort."

Our Incident Command Team, led by Peter Porcelli, Director of Safety and Support Services, spearheaded our efforts to address safety and other

vital policy concerns in the hospital's response to the crisis.

Here's a look at some of the adjustments that various departments made and how your support helped to make it happen.

## **Clinical Adaptations**

The mental health implications of the pandemic were early and significant. Silver Hill had to adjust quickly to keep its doors open without interruption. Sending patients home and halting new admissions could have had disastrous consequences for those patients.

Outpatient services switched to a virtual format almost overnight thanks to the knowledge and hard work of the IT department. Inpatient and residential treatment continued seamlessly with extra precautions put in place, such as wearing masks, social distancing and more frequent housekeeping put in place.

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## COVID-19 HEROES ON THE FRONTLINE

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New patients were screened thoroughly before admission.

"The biggest thing was trying to stay ahead of it – prescreening patients and having an isolation space available should someone get the virus," says Mia Handler, MD, Director of Psychiatry.

Perhaps the biggest change to come out of the pandemic is telemedicine. It had been a growing trend before COVID-19, but has now become commonplace for medical and psychiatric care.

challenges created by the pandemic. "Everyone had a different challenge, and everyone adjusted," he says.

### IT Services

The members of the Silver Hill Hospital Information Technology Services (ITS) Department were the invisible hands working behind the scenes to help guide the hospital through the pandemic, from the early stages to the vaccination of its staff.

Early in the crisis, ITS secured and deployed more than 100 laptops

out their duties with the ability to collaborate in real time. In addition, the hospital's firewall was upgraded and internet speed was doubled to ensure greater functionality.

***"It was a difficult year in a lot of ways for us, and across the board, the Silver Hill staff answered the call and responded quickly to the crisis."***

***Peter Porcelli  
Director of Safety and Support Services***



*Director of Safety and Support Services Peter Porcelli leads Silver Hill's Incident Command Team, which addresses the hospital's response to the COVID-19 crisis.*

The automated scheduling and booking of a vaccination time, made possible by ITS, was instrumental in helping on-site and remote employees navigate the process.

### Safe Dining Services

Henry Godfrey has been at Silver Hill for 14 years. As Director of Dining Services, Chef Henry knows how important it is to provide nutritious meals to Silver Hill's patients and staff. Safety has always been a top priority in the kitchen, but COVID moved safety protocols to another level.

Silver Hill had to cut down on the number of patients allowed in the dining area at one time. That meant

Handler says telemedicine has been transformative for all medicine.

Groat is proud of the way the clinical staff stepped up and adapted to the

and computer monitors for Silver Hill staff and volunteers. ITS also provided each board member with an iPad to virtually carry

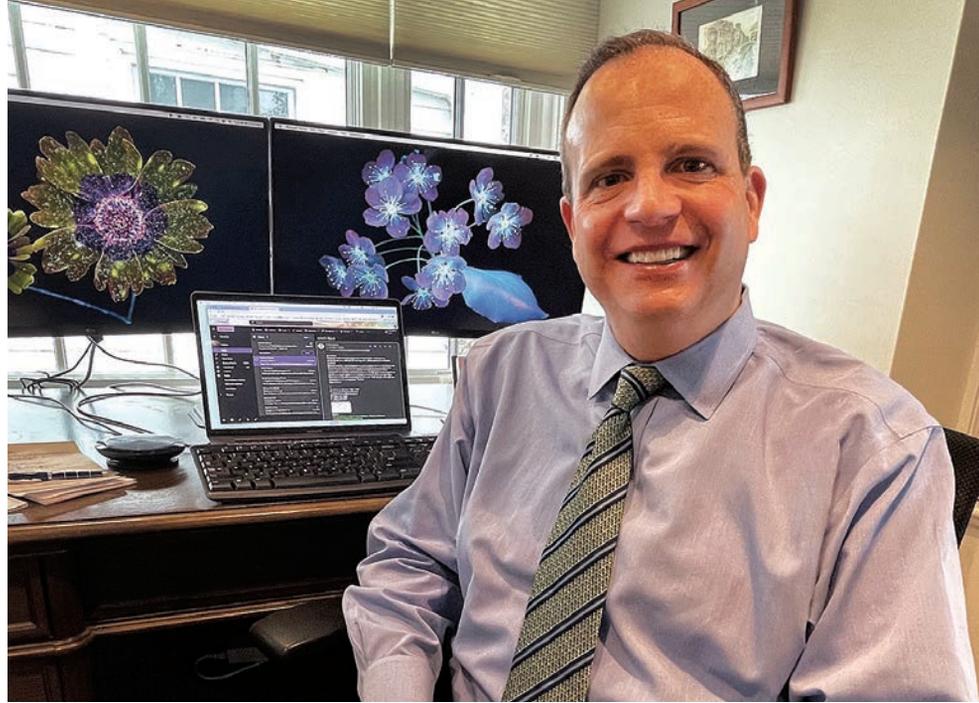
more frequent sittings and delivering food to some houses.

Godfrey's staff made necessary changes – at work and at home – to keep themselves and those who enjoyed their meals at Silver Hill safe. Godfrey advised his staff of 21 employees that what they do at home impacts those they work with.

"I'm so proud of my staff," Godfrey says. "I know it takes a lot to not do the things you want to do, but they know they need to be here to help the residents. I've got staff who are really doing a great job, keeping people safe and giving them a good meal."

## Team Vaccinations

Healthcare personnel were eligible to receive the COVID-19 vaccination during Phase 1a of Connecticut's



*Dr. Michael Groat, Chief Clinical Officer at Silver Hill, credits the staff for keeping the hospital's infection rate below 1% during the peak of the outbreak.*

rollout plan. Silver Hill Hospital worked quickly to secure vaccines for its staff (clinical and nonclinical), volunteers and contractors. Director of Quality Improvement and Risk Management Emily Hart and Director of Nursing Sharon Kowalchuk, along with many others, spearheaded the effort.

Emily described the process as "chaos behind closed doors" as regulations changed daily, but order and calm on the outside as the vaccination team encouraged staff to get their shots. Silver Hill applied for the shots with the state on November 13 and administered our first doses on December 29.



By the end, Silver Hill had vaccinated 76 percent of its staff, volunteers and contractors. There were no wasted shots, as all 800 vaccines that the hospital received were administered.

"It was such a neat way to see the community come together. It couldn't have gone any better than it did," Emily said. "It was an incredible experience after a year of such stress and fear. Just to see the staff again was so uplifting and positive. I'm grateful we were able to provide this to our staff." ■

*Members of Silver Hill's Vaccination Team include Director of Nursing Sharon Kowalchuk, RN, Director of QI and Risk Management Emily Hart, and Cathleen Gelman, PhD.*

# It's a Dog's Life.

“Bo simply makes Silver Hill care better!”



Bo is a certified therapy dog owned by Peter and Elizabeth Clark. Peter is a Patient Navigator at Silver Hill Hospital and brings Bo to work with him on Tuesdays and Fridays. Bo accompanies Peter as he makes his rounds to visit the various houses on campus. Seeing Bo, a sturdy four-

and-a-half-year-old black Labrador retriever, is the highlight of the day for many patients and staff members.

“Tuesdays and Fridays are my favorite days to be here because Bo is here. Truly,” says Dr. Mia Handler, Director of Psychiatry at Silver Hill Hospital. As a bonus, Mia’s office is right

around the corner from Peter’s office, so Bo is never far away.

Patients give Peter and Bo many *Silver Stars*, tokens of appreciation for acts that make a patient feel welcome, happy, comfortable or safe. Peter is quick to deflect the credit to his four-legged companion, but

Peter's affable demeanor is the perfect complement to Bo's placid nature.

"They are a wonderful pair," wrote one patient on a *Silver Star*. "Both are so therapeutic and caring. Peter is such a great listener and is a very authentic and empathetic person."

Bo's services as a certified therapy dog are needed more than ever in these stressful times. For the safety of patients and staff members, Silver Hill Hospital restricted the use of volunteers at the beginning of the pandemic in order to limit the number of people coming on campus.

Another *Silver Star* from a patient reads: "Bo has such a positive impact on patients at Silver Hill. Bo and Peter are greatly appreciated and it's big for us to spend time with the D.O.G. (Director of Goodness)"

"During COVID, Bo has become a celebrity of sorts here," Peter says. "He cruises around with me because I'm all throughout the campus on a regular basis."

## Benefits of Therapy Dogs

According to research by UCLA's People-Animal Connection, therapy dogs have numerous mental health benefits for patients, including loneliness reduction, comfort, lower anxiety and increased mental stimulation and memory recall. Its research also



Bo shows off some of his *Silver Stars*

found that petting an animal can generate an automatic relaxation response by releasing serotonin,

prolactin and oxytocin – all mood-elevating hormones.

"There's a therapeutic aspect, for sure," Dr. Handler says. "There's a sense of security and safety that comes with engaging with another



Peter Clark and Bo stroll the Silver Hill campus.

being that is not human. You have to use a different part of your brain to connect with them. When you have a dog like Bo that you can trust, that trust is important in building self-confidence."

Besides, Peter adds, "He's just cute and fun to be with."

## Bo's story

Bo came to the Clarks following a "career change." He was training with Guiding Eyes for the Blind in Yorktown Heights, N.Y., to become a guide dog.

Because of the tremendous expense and time it takes to develop a guide dog, many candidates are removed

from the program early in training. These dogs are put up for adoption for alternate careers or to be pets.

There is a long waiting list to adopt a dog from Guiding Eyes. Peter and Elizabeth waited two-and-a-half years before "they called out of the blue to see if we were still interested in adopting."

"Bo was the right dog for us," Peter recalls and Bo became a member of the family, along with the Clark's two children and two older long-haired dachshunds. Henry, one of the dachshunds, previously served as a therapy dog.

The Clarks brought Bo to The Good Dog Foundation in New York City, to be trained as a therapy dog. Bo is now a certified therapy and crisis response dog, meaning he can be called into an emergency situation to offer "unconditional love and companionship," Peter says.

Bo made such an impact at The Good Dog Foundation that he was Mr. September in the organization's 2019 fundraising calendar.

## Making the Rounds

The *Silver Stars* recognize the impact Peter and Bo have on patients, but Peter says he gets a lot in return by being there for others. Just seeing Bo, Peter says, can flip the script for a patient having a bad day.

"It's very rewarding and gratifying to see the impact Bo has on patients," Peter says. "He knows who needs his attention and patients open up and respond to him. He's a very cuddly dog. A lot of dogs won't let you hug them for any extended of time, but patients do that to him all the time. It's very grounding to have a dog like Bo around." ■

# *New Center Yields Life-Changing Results for Patients with Complex Conditions*

Last year, with the help of a generous grant from the Samuel I Newhouse Foundation, Silver Hill Hospital created the Center for the Treatment and Study of Neuropsychiatric Disorders to improve outcomes for patients with persistent psychiatric disorders and other forms of severe mental illness.



*Dr. Meriwether Brown and  
Dr. Rocco Marotta on the  
Silver Hill campus.*

Under the direction of Rocco Marotta, MD, PhD, the newly created Center for the Treatment and Study of Neuropsychiatric Disorders seeks to improve outcomes for patients with persistent psychiatric disorders and other forms of severe mental illness. The goal of the Center is to document and share the successful treatment model, developed at Silver Hill, to help more patients with serious psychiatric disorders get the treatment they need to live a productive life.

Dr. Marotta and his team have had unusual success treating patients with complex psychiatric conditions, such as schizophrenia and bipolar disorder, using intensive clinical intervention along with various medications. Dr. Marotta has found that Clozapine (an antipsychotic medication) and Oxytocin (a peptide hormone and neuropeptide) are highly promising in treating the varying symptoms of severe psychiatric disorders.

Clozapine is used to treat the positive symptoms (hallucinations and delusions), while Oxytocin is added to allay the negative symptoms, such as social withdrawal and apathy, that often persist. He has found that the combination of the medications, used alongside other therapies, have yielded life-changing results in many cases, enabling patients to return to school or work and successfully navigate interpersonal relationships in their daily lives.

Numerous testimonials from patients and family members support Dr. Marotta's uniquely successful outcomes. "Now I see that I am just like other people," a patient of Dr. Marotta said. "I can be happy."

A grateful family member wrote: "He is reborn. Not locked up and alone."

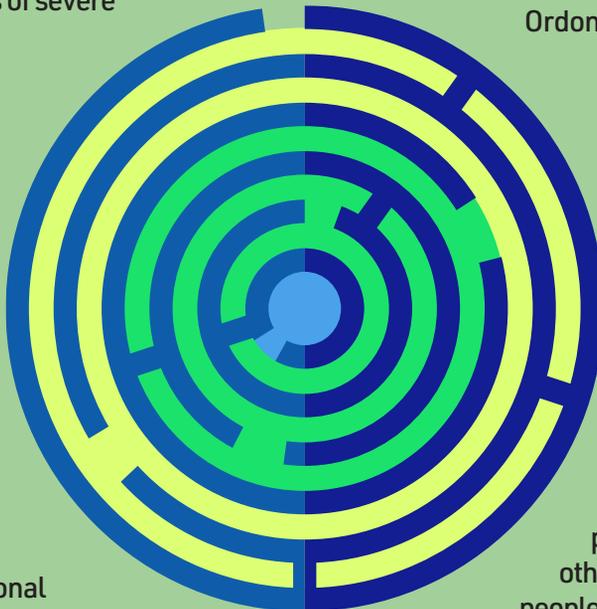
Despite the hospital having to adjust to the many demands and distractions of COVID-19, the new Center accomplished a great deal in the past year, including the completion of a retrospective study of 30 former Silver Hill Hospital patients.

The Center's research program is overseen by Dr. Sam Ball, who is both Professor of Psychiatry and Associate Dean for Faculty Affairs at the Yale School

of Medicine as well as the Director of Research for Silver Hill Hospital. The research group also includes Katharine Dougherty and Jolie Gorchov.

A central part of Dr. Marotta's clinical team is Dr. Meriwether Brown who was hired this year to provide additional support to patients, along with creating an opportunity for Dr. Marotta to mentor a psychiatrist to continue his extraordinary work. Dr. Meriwether Brown brings a developmental perspective as a child and adolescent psychiatrist with 17 years of clinical experience.

Working together with a shared vision, Dr. Brown and Dr. Marotta personify a dynamic collaborative approach to patient care with the essential support of the entire residential treatment team at Michael's House including Wallace Stacy, Senior Clinical Social Worker, Emily Day, Senior Residential Counselor, and Jackie Ordonez, Social Worker.



## Among the goals of the Center are:

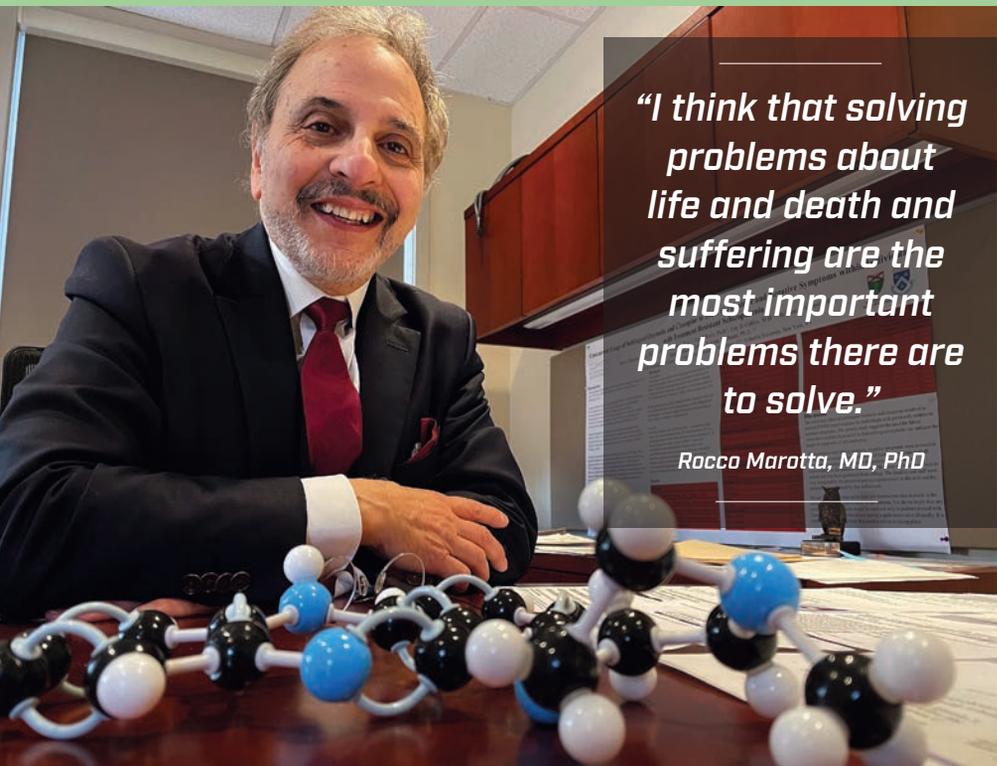
- Improve early detection, diagnosis, and treatment of severe mental health disorders, and educate patients and families about the importance of early detection.
- Increase awareness among parents, families, educators and others who can help identify young people experiencing mental health issues and find them appropriate assistance.

- Advance the use of high-quality, evidence-based, and scalable treatment of these disorders.

- Foster and encourage others to emulate the compassionate, highly personal, team treatment approach that is the hallmark of Dr. Marotta's work.

Silver Hill Hospital's vision for the Center for the Treatment and Study of Neuropsychiatric Disorders is ambitious in scope and its potential impact is considerable. Fundraising efforts were slowed by the pandemic but are accelerating in 2021. The hope is to eventually endow the Director's position and perhaps the entire Center so that Dr. Rocco Marotta's legacy of helping Silver Hill Hospital patients and families can continue in perpetuity. ■

# Dr. Marotta: Solving Problems. Transforming Lives.



*“I think that solving problems about life and death and suffering are the most important problems there are to solve.”*

*Rocco Marotta, MD, PhD*

Dr. Rocco Marotta, or Rocky as he is better known, never shies away from a problem. He has been a psychiatrist at Silver Hill Hospital for 11 years and has built a reputation as being an out-of-the-box thinker who gets unusually successful outcomes for patients with challenging mental health conditions, such as schizophrenia and bipolar disorder.

“I’m most proud of taking care of patients and building up the program for persistent psychosis,” Dr. Marotta says. “Taking care of really sick patients has always been an interest of mine because we live in a world that makes it really hard for people with vulnerabilities.”

Rocky says working at Silver Hill Hospital gives him the freedom to pursue research and to transform the lives of those living with serious persistent psychosis. Silver Hill is entirely focused on its mission of providing patients with the best available treatment for mental illness and addiction. It’s a place where staff and patients are treated like family and where the clinicians are highly trained professionals who have eschewed the academic life in order to care for patients every day.

“I’m atheoretical. I try not have any ideology,” Rocky says. “I don’t think of things as an illness, even though we talk about them as if they are

an illness. Helping people is about believing it is possible.”

He enjoys working with patients that doctors elsewhere were not successful in helping. In the last edition of Silver Linings, you met Carl. His son Jake had gone from “capable to catatonic” in one year presumably because of heavy cannabis use. Jake had seen many doctors in his home state of New Jersey to treat his psychosis. None of them were able to help him and the last doctor suggested that Jake be moved to a state mental health facility to live.

As a last resort, Carl turned to Silver Hill Hospital because he had heard of a doctor there who works with extremely difficult patient cases.

“Rocky was my only hope,” Carl recalls.

“If it’s a business, you take the cases that are easy,” Rocky says. “If it’s a vocation, you take what God grants you and you try to make the most with that situation. The Romans would lose battles but not lose wars. Why? Because of their tenacity.”

At 73, he is already beyond the age at which he could retire. The concept, however, does not appeal to Dr. Marotta. “I’m not ready to sit down and write poetry and paint just yet,” he says. “My wife asked me what’s on my bucket list. I said to have health and strength to continue the work I’m doing. If you have meaningful work and love in your life, what more could you want?” ■

## EXPERIENCE AND CREDENTIALS

### Rocco Marotta, MD, PhD

#### Board Certification

American Board of Psychiatry and Neurology

#### Residency

New York Hospital,  
Payne Whitney Clinic

#### Medical School

Cornell University Medical College

#### Fellowship

Biological Psychiatry, NIH Fellowship

#### Academic Affiliations

Associate Clinical Professor of  
Psychiatry, New York Medical College

Fellow, American Psychiatric  
Association

Ph.D. in Neuropsychology – City  
University of New York

# OUR SERVICES FOR ADOLESCENTS

## Specialized Treatment for Youth

Adolescent mental health problems are not new, but the issue became a crisis over the past year. Today, adolescents represent a rising percentage of the people experiencing mental health distress. Early diagnosis and appropriate services for children and their families can make a tremendous difference in taking on this challenge. Our adolescent service line offers comprehensive treatment for youths ages 13-17 who are struggling with psychiatric disorders or co-occurring substance abuse issues. Our adolescent service directors understand the unique challenges of treating this important group of young people and, on the next page, highlight the key aspects of adolescent treatment at Silver Hill Hospital.



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# OUR SERVICES FOR ADOLESCENTS

Specialized Treatment for Youth

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The directors of Silver Hill Hospital's adolescent services know young people face a unique set of challenges during the adolescent phase of development. Successful strategies for handling mental and emotional difficulties during adolescence can prevent suffering in adulthood, they say.

"The reason I enjoy working with adolescents is the deep-seated belief that if you can deal with things now you can save yourself years of suffering afterward," Frank Bartolomeo, PhD, says. "Most mental health conditions and addictions start in adolescence. That's why I've been focused on adolescents for 30 years."

Bartolomeo came to Silver Hill Hospital as Director of Adolescent Services in fall 2019. He joined a leadership team that includes Ava Albrecht, MD, who is the

Adolescent Inpatient Service Chief, and Elizabeth Ortiz-Schwartz, MD, the Adolescent TLP Service Chief. They have made significant changes in the treatment of mental illness and addiction in young people.

The residential adolescent program was extended from four weeks to five weeks, and treatment now focuses more heavily on socio-drama therapy. These supportive expressive groups are emotion- and experiential-based. Adolescents

learn DBT (dialectical behavior therapy) skills and receive feedback from their peers, which Bartolomeo says is more powerful than coming from an adult. It is also more effective than some of the previous cognitive treatments.

"Kids don't respond to worksheets as well as they do to engagement," Bartolomeo says.

*Above: Elizabeth Ortiz-Schwartz, MD, Adolescent TLP Service Chief*

*Below: Ava Albrecht, MD, Adolescent Inpatient Service Chief.*



"Adolescents need help learning how to express their needs and wants so that they can be acknowledged and effectively addressed."

Silver Hill's adolescent programs are first in launching new outcomes assessments. Measures of depression, anxiety, motivation for change, and emotional regulation are administered upon a patient's arrival, during the middle of their stay and again at discharge to see where improvements were made and what areas to continue working on.

The data obtained helps determine a program's effectiveness. A similar process for launching measurement-based treatment is being implemented in other areas of the hospital as well. ■



*Dr. Frank Bartolomeo, Director of Adolescent Services*



# An Epidemic within the Pandemic

Bartolomeo says there was a mental health crisis among adolescents even before COVID-19 and the various stressors associated with the pandemic has made things worse. He calls it an epidemic among a pandemic.

“COVID has exacerbated mental health problems among adolescents. If someone had a high baseline of anxiety, their anxiety has gone up,” Bartolomeo says. “The same is true for depression. Isolation exacerbates both because we are hardwired to connect to other human beings. Not being able to be around other human beings has caused a lot of problems for us.”

The Center for Disease Control and Prevention reported that one in four emerging adults have thought about suicide during COVID. Adolescent patients at Silver Hill have talked about the lack of structure impacting their mental health, Bartolomeo says.

“A lot of structure in these kids’ lives has been turned upside down,” he says. “Then there are all these embedded losses among COVID, the loss of normality during what are supposed to be some of your key years – the loss of prom and sporting events, for example. Student athletes are losing scholarships. For college kids, exchange programs have been canceled, there are no football games or parties. They feel like the rug keeps getting pulled out from underneath them. The ground doesn’t feel firm.”

Virtual connection has helped, Bartolomeo says, but it cannot replace in-person interaction. “We are meant to be connected,” Bartolomeo says. “When we are isolated, we are off. All these things lead to frustration.” ■



Peter Clark and Molly Norton (Director of Patient Experience at Silver Hill), the hospital's two Patient Navigators, discuss the workings of the program.

## Role of the Patient Navigator

- Meet with patient and family at admission to establish relationship and review patient rights
- Orient patient and family to hospital
- Work with clinicians to get treatment questions answered
- Visit patient at least once during inpatient stay to answer questions and provide support
- Assist with progression to Transitional Living Program stay; ensure luggage arrives before patient, tour the house, call family to inform of safe transition
- Visit patient at least twice during residential stay
- Follow up within one week of discharge
- Provide additional post-discharge support

# Guiding patients every step of the way.

## Patient Navigator program guides patients from admission to discharge and beyond

People come to Silver Hill Hospital in times of great distress. Nagging logistical questions are the last thing patients and their families need.

### **What is the visiting etiquette?**

### **When can I expect to hear from the treatment team?**

### **What is the best number to reach the doctor?**

Our new Patient Navigator program is the answer to those questions, and many others that may arise during a patient's stay at Silver Hill. A trained navigator works one-on-one with a patient and family from admission through the end of treatment, and even beyond with post-discharge follow up. The navigator ensures a seamless

experience through high-touch customer service.

The Patient Navigator program is currently in its pilot phase and we hope to expand the program soon. It is enthusiastically endorsed by our Patient and Family Advisory Council, which is made up of people who have prior experience with Silver Hill.

"It will be amazing! We are going to help patients and families feel connected and supported throughout their experience," says Molly Norton, Director of Patient Experience at Silver Hill. "Our customers deserve the highest level of customer service we can provide."

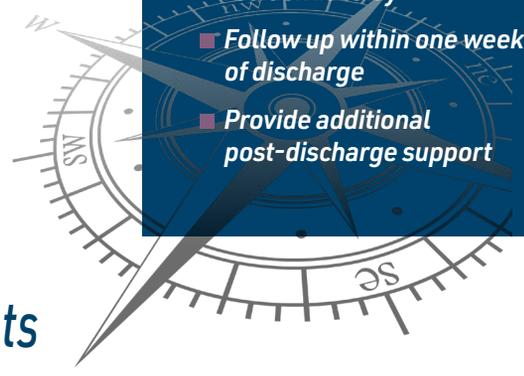
Molly, along with Peter Clark, are the Navigators and have assisted patients

and families with a variety of questions and concerns. "Behavior health is inherently confusing and nuanced," says Molly, "and a Patient Navigator helps provide information, support and guidance every step of the way."

Lisa Benton, Silver Hill's Chief Quality Officer, said the early response to the Patient Navigator program has been overwhelmingly positive.

"The response is clear," Lisa says. "Patients and families appreciate the high-touch service and report an even better experience of care."

The Patient Navigator program is another way your support is helping Silver Hill Hospital improve the overall experience for our patients. ■

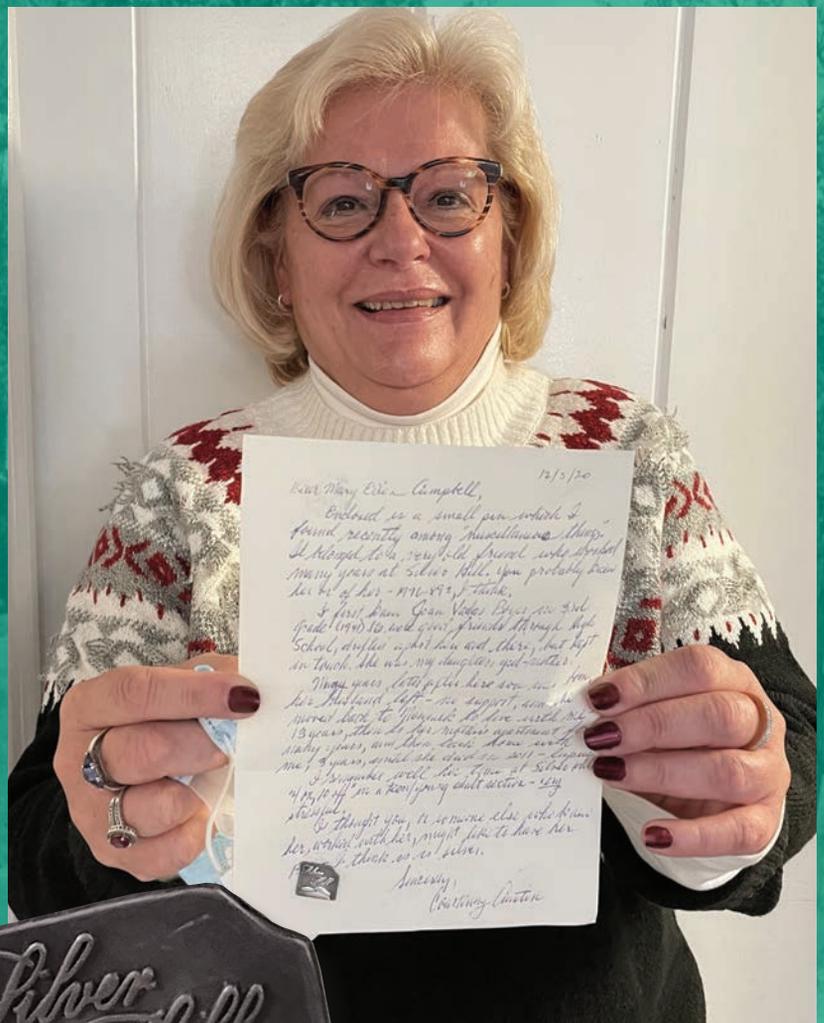


# A trip down memory lane

Mary Ellen Campbell, a nurse of 42 years at Silver Hill Hospital and the cover story subject of the last Silver Linings edition, received an interesting letter in the mail recently. It was addressed from Norwalk, Connecticut's Courtenay Austin, a name not familiar to Mary Ellen.

The letter explained that Courtenay was friends and a former roommate of Joan Vadas Boyer, who worked as a nurse at Silver Hill Hospital in the 1970s and 1980s. Joan passed away in 2011 and as Courtenay was cleaning out drawers in her house recently, she came across a pin that recognized Joan's five-year anniversary of working at the hospital. The pewter pin was attached to the letter and gave Mary Ellen a surprise trip down memory lane.

"I remember Joan. She worked as a night nurse here," Mary Ellen says. "This letter came out of nowhere. It's so thoughtful and brings back memories."



# Our innovative ways continue.

## New Programs Propel Silver Hill to Forefront of Patient Care

In the midst of adjusting the way it delivers mental health treatment during a pandemic, Silver Hill Hospital also developed and launched several new clinical programs to address the evolving needs of patients.

"Starting in 2019, several workgroups emerged to look at opportunities to advance care at Silver Hill," Chief Clinical Officer Michael Groat, PhD, says. "We spent a lot of time the first year looking at adolescent services and how to better meet the needs of teens and their families. In 2020, we zeroed in on the needs of adult patients and their families."

The following is a look at four major clinical programs Silver Hill Hospital launched in the past year. Your support helps make these innovations possible and creates hope for patients and families.

### *The Argent Program*

#### Providing a Better Roadmap for Treatment

This psychiatric assessment and evaluation service is an eight-day, or more, residential

deep dive into all aspects of a patient's mental and physical wellbeing. The goal is for patients to have a better understanding of their condition and to provide a detailed roadmap for ongoing and effective treatment.



*Dr. Michael Groat  
Chief Clinical Officer*

With a team that includes a psychiatrist, psychologist, and social worker, Argent patients undergo an intensive assessment that culminates in a comprehensive diagnostic report with insights and recommended care plan, including clinician referrals. Silver Hill attending psychiatrist Howard Weiner, MD, leads the

program with support from other clinicians at the hospital.

"This is an exciting and huge step forward for us as a hospital because it means that in addition to the excellent clinical interventions we provide for adults and adolescents, we can now carefully assess people and help them plan their treatment around their core needs and priorities," Groat says.

### *Aftercare Support Services*

#### A New Continuum of Care for Patients with Mental Health Issues

The Aftercare Support Services bring Silver Hill Hospital's continuum of care to the next level. Patients treated for substance abuse have many options for continued support and care after being discharged from Silver Hill. Aftercare options are much more limited for people with persistent mental illness.

Silver Hill's Aftercare Support Services address this need

with individualized case management, coordination of care, crisis support, and family support at both pre- and post-discharge. It also gives patients a fast track for readmission, should that become necessary. The program launched for psychotic spectrum and bipolar disorder patients and has expanded to include those living with personality disorders and adolescents.

"Our patients told us of their need for more support in maintaining stability in the community," Dr. Groat says. "Aftercare support helps people stay connected within their community. We provide a lot of tangible support for them and keep in touch with their care providers. This new service is a way of extending our continuum of care."

## Trauma Recovery Services

### Helps Patients Get 'Unstuck'

Trauma and adverse childhood experiences are far more common than many people think. Upwards of 60 percent or more of patients that come to Silver Hill Hospital report experiences of adversity in their lives. Increased exposure to adversity in one's life can incrementally increase the risk of physical and mental illness later in life.

Dr. Groat notes that the stress caused by past traumatic experiences can sometimes be difficult to overcome. People may avoid relationships or live in fear. To resolve these challenges, a trauma therapist uses an evidence-based treatment approach to help the patient break through "stuck points" that prevent the patient from living life to the fullest.

"Over 90% of those who complete our 12 to 15 session trauma program experience significant symptomatic relief from the symptoms of trauma. People feel freer and better able to cope," Dr. Groat says. "We believe the Trauma Recovery Service differentiates Silver Hill in this region."

## DBT-S

### (Specialized Dialectical Behavioral Therapy for Substance Abuse)

Silver Hill Hospital launched its Dialectical Behavioral Therapy for Substance Abuse, or DBT-S, program earlier this year. This customized curriculum builds on the principles of DBT and applies similar coping strategies for people struggling with a substance abuse disorder and co-occurring psychiatric conditions.

In the DBT-S program, patients learn how to manage their emotions and urges to use more effectively. They also learn and practice the skills necessary to

build emotionally healthy and sober lives.

"This new curriculum builds on a Silver Hill strength," Dr. Groat says. "We are among only a few programs in the United States that offers a staff as intensively and expertly trained in DBT as those found at Silver Hill. This new program helps us stand out even more."

## What's ahead for Silver Hill?

### The future is bright!

Clinical innovation will continue in the year ahead for Silver Hill Hospital. Dr. Groat says the clinical team is looking ahead to proactively address emerging mental health concerns.

Silver Hill Hospital is looking into ways to better serve the LGBTQ communities. Many of the adolescents who come to Silver Hill have confusion or discomfort around their gender identity.

"There is more openness to examining the distress many feel around gender identity," Dr. Groat says. "We are looking at how to respond to these needs, including more gender affirming programming, staff training, and inclusive messaging. We want to be proactive and lead the way." ■

# Helping Organizations Weather the Health Crisis

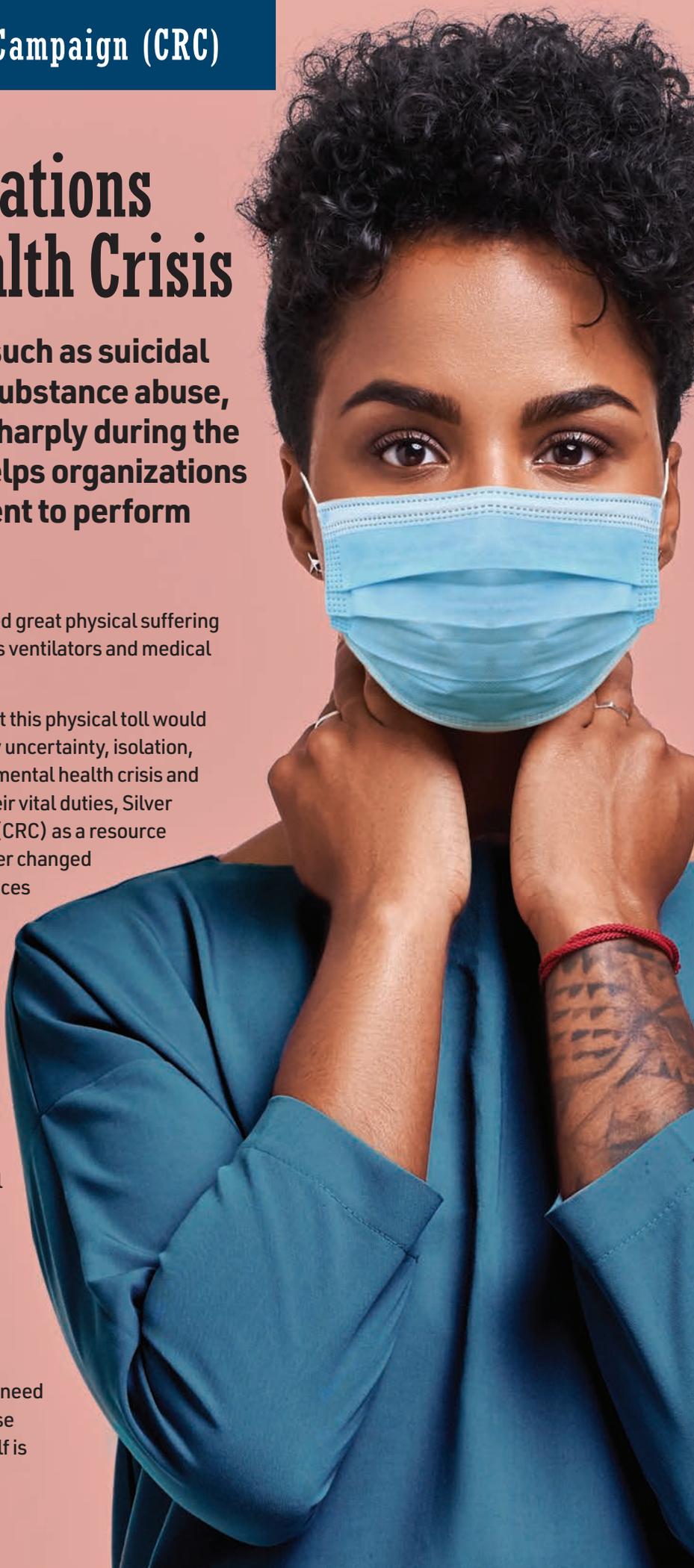
**Mental health implications such as suicidal thoughts, opioid and other substance abuse, and depression have risen sharply during the COVID-19 crisis. The CRC helps organizations keep their employees resilient to perform their vital work.**

The initial COVID-19 outbreak in the U.S. caused great physical suffering as hospitals overflowed and equipment such as ventilators and medical face masks were in short supply.

Silver Hill Hospital recognized immediately that this physical toll would be accompanied by mental suffering caused by uncertainty, isolation, anxiety and myriad other factors. To meet this mental health crisis and keep essential workers resilient to perform their vital duties, Silver Hill launched the COVID Resilience Campaign (CRC) as a resource to the community. (The program name was later changed to Community Resilience Campaign as its services continue even as the pandemic recedes.)

CRC facilitators provide unique mental health training tailored to an organization's individual needs with the aim of keeping employees resilient in the face of a growing and lingering crisis. Originally created to meet the mental health needs of overwhelmed medical workers, the CRC has widened its breadth to include first responders, schoolteachers, health care workers, essential workers and other organizations. The CRC has also worked with area youth in recognition of the tremendous mental health challenges students are facing during the pandemic.

Pandemic-fueled spikes in mental health problems such as suicide, substance abuse, depression and anxiety underscore the critical need for programs like the CRC. Experts believe these problems will continue long after the virus itself is



# Supporter Spotlight



Mr. Rudy Ruggles

development. He has trained U.S. Army soldiers and their families in resilience and psychological skill building. He has also worked with business leaders and elite athletes.

"It's a great team with their own specialties all working together for a common objective," Ruggles says.

Ruggles brings his own skills and perspectives. He follows closely the work and findings of scientists and provides the CRC team with the most current information on this unfolding scene.

Ruggles is currently a Board member and Adjunct Researcher at the J. Craig Venter Institute, a leader in genomic, or DNA, research. In addition, he founded the Rudy L. Ruggles Biomedical Research Institute.

He is world traveler and has been to dozens of countries for work, research and pleasure. His destinations span the globe, from the Arctic to Antarctica, and include an 8,500-foot descent to the bottom of the Atlantic Ocean in a Russian deep submersible. It is no wonder that he was elected a fellow of the Explorers Club in 1980.

Ruggles has seen the important work the CRC has done and knows the need for this type of training will continue for a long time as the mental health implications continue to unfold. "The reason I put in the initial funding is because I believe in the project," Ruggles says. ■

contained, confirming the need for CRC services to be sustained.

The training, done mostly as live virtual seminars, is provided as a community service and several regional organizations and law enforcement agencies have benefited from the CRC. More than 1,000 individuals have received CRC training. The president of NAMI-CT, a nonprofit mental health organization, said CRC training helped her counselors prioritize themselves during a tremendously stressful time of high demand for their services. "You can't help others if you are completely depleted," she said. CRC team members have heard similar responses from other organizations.

"We're trying to get these survival skills to people who are really feeling it," CRC Director Stephen N. Xenakis, MD Brigadier General (Ret) says. "I'd like to build it out. I think this pandemic is going to be with us for a long time. People are going to need our help. Once things start to calm down, even a little, and people stop thinking about it, that's when you see all the other problems. We're ready to help." ■

The tremendous impact Silver Hill Hospital's Community Resilience Campaign had in 2020 was funded entirely by supporters like you. Rudy Ruggles, a longtime resident of Ridgefield, provided the initial funding to launch the Campaign. Ruggles has been a supporter of Silver Hill Hospital for many years, and he recalls clearly the conversation he had when President and Medical Director Dr. Andrew Gerber called in the spring to discuss the possibility of forming the CRC.

"I already understood the need for a new and targeted source of mental health support, even at the early stages of the COVID-19 pandemic," Ruggles says. "Other recent pandemics, such as Ebola that was ultimately contained, were a bellwether for things to come. The COVID-19 outbreak was suddenly worldwide. It was highly contagious, often fatal, and caused by a coronavirus about which little was known, and which was already mutating in unpredictable ways. In addition to its medical threat, the mandated sequestering, kids home from school, losses of jobs and income, will combine to cause multiple psychiatric consequences.

Ruggles and Stephen Xenakis, MD, director of the CRC, did not know each other prior to the formation of the Campaign, but they bonded quickly over their similar backgrounds, areas of expertise and common goals for the resilience program.

"He knew this pandemic was going to have a huge impact and that there would be ripple effects over time. It was the same feeling I had as a military officer," Dr. Xenakis, a retired Brigadier General, says.

Matt DeBernardis is the Campaign Liaison and Resiliency Trainer. He brings a unique background to the CRC as well as a passion for personal



TOWERS | GOLDE

A G E N E R O U S G I F T W I L L P R O V I D E

# The nature for healing

A generous gift from a grateful family member of two Silver Hill Hospital patients will transform the lawn in front of the Main House to a field of wildflowers, complete with water feature and pedestrian walkways.

“These landscaping improvements have been sought for many years, but funding had not been available,” President and Medical Director Andrew J. Gerber, MD, PhD, says. “We are deeply honored by this gift from the grateful family of Silver Hill patients.”

The project is expected to begin in the summer and largely completed by the fall, though the new wildflowers will take a few years to be fully established. The water feature will include a sitting area with WiFi so meetings or group sessions may be held there.

The pedestrian walkways will serve the dual purpose of adding aesthetic beauty to the property and enhancing safety on the West Campus by keeping pedestrians off the roads and driveways. ■



TOWERS | GOLDE

*Left and above: Artist renderings of planned landscaping on front lawn of the Main House.*

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Silver Hill Hospital is pleased to recognize the following donors for their generosity during the 2020 calendar year:

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For more information, please visit **SilverHillHospital.org** or call our Advancement Office at **203-801-2398**.



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